

Preparing Neighborhoods for Disaster:
An Analysis of Smart Practices
In the Bay Area and Recommendations
For the City of Hayward

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Like many cities in the San Francisco Bay Area, Hayward is vulnerable to disaster, in particular, a major earthquake. It is the City's responsibility to educate and assist its citizens in preparing for and remaining ready to cope with disaster when it occurs. Currently, the City of Hayward has a government level disaster management plan and several volunteer disaster response training programs, but no community driven, coordinated neighborhood plan. Therefore, Hayward's neighborhoods are under-prepared to respond to a large scale disaster.

Report Methodology and Evaluative Criteria

Smart practices appropriate for the City of Hayward were selected after reading disaster preparedness literature, conducting interviews with disaster management experts and Hayward city officials, and reviewing the efforts of other local, state and national organizations. They were evaluated for effectiveness; long-term sustainability; cost; and equity.

Summary of Recommended Smart Practices

1. Streamline neighborhood outreach efforts.

Collaboration is the key for efficiency, cost effectiveness, equity and long-term program sustainability. Pooling initiatives and resources is also the way to compensate for limited budgets (FEMA 2011). By linking community outreach efforts, such as Neighborhood Watch, Neighborhood Partnership Program and CERT, duplication of services can be avoided. Additionally, citizens have a better chance of preparing and remaining ready for disaster when education and training is linked with other outreach efforts. Palo Alto's Office of Emergency Services has successfully partnered with neighborhood groups to create a disaster prep program. This effort radically increased volunteers and streamlined its neighborhood initiatives. While very efficient, a successful effort needs time and staff to coordinate the program which will be an initial challenge for Hayward.

2. Organize CERT by neighborhood.

Currently, Hayward's CERT teams are organized by zip code. Local residents are more familiar with perceived neighborhood boundaries than with zip codes. Mountain View organizes its CERT teams by neighborhood, which establishes a community feeling that supports a larger neighborhood. A CERT team can encompass a street, block or a multifamily housing complex (City of Mountain View 2012a). It can be linked with Neighborhood Watch or Neighborhood Partnership groups. In a city whose neighborhoods may be divided in an earthquake, this system is very useful. It is cost efficient, equitable and has potential for long term volunteer engagement.

3. Partner with community service agencies to reach vulnerable populations.

CARD, or Collaborating Agencies Responding to Disaster, is a disaster training agency that specializes in working with non-profits, faith based organizations and community agencies who serve elderly, homeless, disabled and low-English proficient groups. They focus on using low-cost curricula to help agencies build capacity, educate and prepare their residents for disaster (CARD 2012). Hayward would be more successful in meeting goals of equity and effectiveness by engaging and activating service agencies working with their most vulnerable citizens. CARD can help them do this.

4. Create database of neighborhood resources and resident skill sets.

"Map Your Neighborhood" is a free program which trains neighborhood residents to map out their neighborhood resources and identify residents with special skills, like doctors, nurses or heavy machinery operators (Washington Military Department 2011). This system is already in use in some neighborhoods in Hayward. The City needs to expand this program and use the information collected by residents to create a database of neighborhood resources to tap in an emergency. This is an effective, low cost way to leverage resources. Materials are also available in a variety of languages and can be adapted to any neighborhood.

5. Place smaller emergency supply caches in neighborhoods for CERT use.

While the HFD has large alternative medical care site caches, community response capacity can be increased with neighborhood caches for CERT team use. Items such as

generators, fire suppression equipment and first aid gear would be placed in secure locations within local neighborhoods for access by trained residents. The City of Berkeley has created such a program and has over 50 of these supply containers through its neighborhoods (Berkeley 2012). This practice is an effective way to assist CERT teams during disaster. Due to expense and maintenance, this intervention should be considered only for areas with well-established neighborhood response efforts.

Suggested Timeline for Implementation

Low to no cost (Immediate-Year1)

- Begin collaborative efforts between the Emergency Services Office, Neighborhood Watch Crime Prevention Specialists and Neighborhood Partnership Manager to design a strategic vision for a coordinated neighborhood disaster preparedness program.
- Establish realistic goals to achieve within stated timeframes, such as 20% of Neighborhood Watch block captains are CERT trained by Year 1.
- Organize CERT by neighborhood
- Begin a pilot program in 1-3 neighborhoods with established Neighborhood Watch groups and/or residents active in Neighborhood Partnership or CERT.
- Bring in CARD to assess community needs and how to best leverage City and community resources.
- Expand MYN and begin building volunteer database.
- Seek grants for funding and plan for expansion of Emergency Services Office.

Medium Cost (1-3 Years)

- Expand strategic vision for coordinated, streamlined neighborhood disaster program.
- Expand pilot program to encompass most of the Neighborhood Watch or Neighborhood Partnership groups and/or neighborhoods with active CERT teams.
- Explore providing successfully trained, pilot program neighborhood groups with neighborhood disaster supply caches.

- Designate a point person to manage the volunteer database, and work with outreach agencies.
- Expand Emergency Services Office to include at least one additional staff member by end of Year 1.
- Continue to seek funding for long term programs.
- Continue to cultivate businesses and nonprofit engagement in community disaster readiness efforts.

High Cost/Long Term (3+ Years)

- Strategic vision of coordinated, streamlined neighborhood disaster program realized as evidenced by achievement of target number of neighborhood participants.